

Peter Meldrum, Who Lost a Fight to Patent Genes, Dies at 71

By Neil Genzlinger

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Peter D. Meldrum, who led the biotech company Myriad Genetics for 23 years, when it was at the heart of a landmark court battle involving whether two genes associated with breast cancer could be patented, died on Dec. 20 in Salt Lake City. He was 71.

A spokesman for the company said the cause was a head injury sustained when he fell while playing touch football with his grandchildren.

Mr. Meldrum and Mark Skolnick founded Myriad Genetics in 1991, and Mr. Meldrum became its chief executive officer the next year, taking it from a small start-up to a publicly traded company that by the time he retired in 2015 had annual revenues of more than \$700 million. Its most visible product during that time was a test for mutations in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes that could indicate a heightened risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

The company had been granted patents on those genes, which, working with several partners, it had isolated after Mary-Claire King, then at the University of California, Berkeley, had traced it to a particular chromosome in 1990.

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